

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /050 W

-----021740 115819 /43

O 021656Z MAR 77 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6797

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 2153

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3 IMPDET

TAGS: PFOR, VE, US

SUBJECT: PUBLICATION OF NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE OF MARCH 1

1. FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM CALLED IN CHARGE TO EXPRESS THE "PRESIDENT'S CONCERN" OVER THE ARTICLE CONCERNING CIA PAYMENTS WHICH APPEARED ON PAGE 8 OF THE NEW YORK TIMES OF MARCH 1. HE SAID THAT WITH THE PUBLICATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER AND PRESIDENT PEREZ' RESPONSE THEY THOUGHT THE MATTER WOULD HAVE BEEN CLOSED. THEY HAD HOPED BY THIS MEANS TO FORECLOSE ANY POSSIBLE EXPLOITATION OF THE ORIGINAL BINDER STORY BY RADICAL ELEMENTS IN VENEZUELA WHO COULD BE EXPECTED TO SEEK AN UNFAVORABLE IMPACT ON U.S.-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS. THE PRESIDENT, HE SAID, OF COURSE WAS TERRIBLY SENSITIZED TO ANY STORIES WHICH APPEARED TO EMANATE FROM USG SOURCES. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT "ON HIS OWN HOOK" IT OCCURRED TO HIM THAT THE CIA OR SOME OTHER USG SOURCE MIGHT ISSUE A STATEMENT THAT THE ATTRIBUTED SOURCES IN THE STORY WERE NOT AUTHORIZED TO SPEAK FOR THE AGENCY. HE ADDED THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AT THAT MOMENT WAS ISSUING A PRESS RELEASE (CARACAS 2150) ON THE SUBJECT AND THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SEEK AN APPOINTMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN THERE ALSO.

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2. THE CHARGE EXPLAINED THAT DAVID PHILLIPS HAD RETIRED SOME TIME AGO (OF WHICH THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS NOT AWARE) AND HIS REMARKS WERE OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO BE HELPFUL IN HIS APPOINTED ROLE AS HEAD OF THE RETIRED AGENTS' ASSOCIATION. HIS STATEMENT COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE INTERPRETED TO REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF ANY USG

AGENCY. IN ADDITION, THE JUXTAPOSITION IN THE STORY OF PHILLIP'S REMARKS AND THE INFORMATION ATTRIBUTED TO "INTELLIGENCE SOURCES" WAS MISLEADING AND APPARENTLY NOT CONNECTED WITH WHAT PHILLIPS WAS QUOTED AS SAYING. THESE OBSERVATIONS CALMED THE FOREIGN MINISTER CONSIDERABLY AND HIS DEMARCHE TURNED INTO A LONG RAMBLING CONVERSATION ON HIS HOPES FOR A SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO THE U.S. BY PRESIDENT PEREZ.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEMARCH AND THE PRESS RELEASE WERE ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF THE PRESIDENT'S SENSITIVITIES TO THE NEW YORK TIMES ALLEGATIONS AND A FURTHER REFLECTION OF HIS IMPULSIVE SHOOT-FROM-THE HIP STYLE. A FRIENDLY JOURNALIST SOURCE INFORMED US THAT MINISTER OF INFORMATION DIEGO ARRIA HAS BEEN PAINED BY THE GOV'S HANDLING OF THIS NEW INCIDENT AND HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO ADVISE THE PRESIDENT TO ALLOW THE MATTER TO DIE A NATURAL DEATH. WE INTERPRET THE SITUATION AS NOT REQUIRING ANY PARTICULAR U.S. RESPONSE AT THIS TIME AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S MUSINGS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A USG STATEMENT TO BE IN THE CATEGORY OF OBITER DICTA. WE DO NOT KNOW AT THIS POINT WHETHER THE CHARGE'S RESPONSE WILL ALSO SERVE TO CALM THE PRESIDENT BUT IT IS EVIDENT THAT AT LEAST THE ABOVE TWO MINISTERS ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PRESENT TACK. AS THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO DEVELOP, THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER AN APPROPRIATE QUESTION FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN THAT WOULD ENABLE US TO MAKE CLEAR THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND CONFIDENTIAL

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COULD BE USED BY THE VENEZUELANS TO MEET WHAT THEY CONSIDER THEIR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS. ASECIO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3 IMPDET
Errors: N/A
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Page Count: 2
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2943691
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PUBLICATION OF NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE OF MARCH 1
TAGS: PFOR, EINV, EFIN, VE, US, CIA, OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM, (PEREZ, CARLOS ANDRES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/734f88ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009